

**Testimony Submitted 3/2/10 to the Human Services Committee**  
**By Mary-Kate Gill, Director of Elder Services, New Opportunities, Inc.**

As a provider of a number of services for clients of the CT Home Care Program, New Opportunities, Inc. strongly supports House Bill No. 283: *An Act Concerning Audits by DSS*.

In 2002, DSS audited New Opportunities, Inc. and examined a sample of 96 claims for Meals on Wheels, homemaker and companion services and emergency response systems. 2 claims for companion services had errors. DSS did not dispute the fact that the companion services were delivered – the hours of service were properly verified by the clients' signatures. The only error was that the companion had failed to check the type of activities (reading, monitor client activities) she had engaged in with her client. Therefore these two claims totaling \$34.56 were disallowed. The penalty for these two errors was \$10,485.00.

The Department of Social Services policy is that penalties for any errors are calculated using an extrapolation formula based upon the total of all payments for the two-year period being audited, including payments made to New Opportunities, Inc. for Meals on Wheels, Chore and Emergency Response System services. These programs had no errors, yet all payments received by New Opportunities, Inc. from DSS for these services were included in the calculation of penalties for Companion Program errors. It should be noted that the total payment to New Opportunities, Inc. for companion services for the two-year audit period was approximately \$20,000.

Although we were assured by DSS that our agency had, in fact, a very good audit, this was little consolation to our organization as we were forced to pay this huge penalty. We urge your support to implement fair and reasonable audit practices. Current DSS audit policy seriously impacts our capacity to provide services to our community's frail elders.

Please contact me at 203-575-4209 if you wish additional information. We thank you for your consideration and hope to have your support for this important legislation.

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